

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 EUR-12 ISO-00 DHA-02 IO-13 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

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R 230942Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3591

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL MONTREAL

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 5169

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TS, XA

SUBJECT: REGIONAL SOLIDARITY PROMPTS TUNISIAN WITHDRAWAL
FROM OLYMPIC GAMES

1. AFTER JULY 21 MEETING BETWEEN PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA
AND FOREIGN MINISTER HABIB CHATTI IN WHICH OLYMPIC GAMES
WERE DISCUSSED, GOT ANNOUNCED SAME DAY THAT IT HAD DECIDED
TO WITHDRAW FROM THE GAMES IN ORDER TO BE AT THE "SIDE
OF OUR BROTHERS WHO FIGHT FOR AN IDEAL THAT IS OURS."
FOREIGN MINISTRY COMMUNIQUE ANNOUNCING DECISION EMPHASIZED
THAT EFFORTS TO NEGOTIATE CONFLICT BETWEEN IOC AND OAU
OVER PARTICIPATION BY NEW ZEALAND HAD FAILED AND QUESTION
TOOK ON POLITICAL CHARACTER. TUNISIA, THE COMMUNIQUE SAID,
COULD NOT DIFFERENTIATE ITSELF FROM AFRICAN, ARAB, AND
ARABO-AFRICAN SOLIDARITY.

2. GOT WITHDRAWAL ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE LATER IN SAME
DAY THAT TUNIS PRESS CARRIED STATEMENT MADE BY HEAD OF
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TUNISIAN OLYMPIC DELEGATION MOHAMED MZALI, ALSOMEMOER

OF THE RULING DESTOURIAN SOCIALIST PARTY POLITICAL BUREAU AND MINISTER OF HEALTH0 IN WHICH HE DECLARED THAT TUNISIA HAD NO REASON TO JOIN THE AFRICAN BOYCOTT AND THAT THERE WAS ABSOLUTELY NO POSSIBILITY THAT TUNISIA WOULD WITHDRAW. HE ASKED WHY NEW ZEALAND IS A SERIOUS ISSUE WHILE A SOUTH AFRICAN CRICKET TEAM WAS CURRENTLY TOURING CANADA AND AFRICAN COUNTRIES HAVE SAID NOTHING OF IT. BEFORE GOT DECISIOP TO WITHDRAW WAS APNOUNCED, WELL PLACED TUNISIANS WERE CONGRATULATIN THE MATURE ATTITUDE OF THEIR GOVERNMENT O THIS QUESTION. MZALI'S REMARKS IN MONTREAL NO DOUBT REFLECTED HIS PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO SPORTS AND BELIEF, MISTAKEN AS IT TURNED OUT, THAT HE HAD SUFFICIENT STATURE WITHIN TUNISIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM TO TAKE SUCH A DECISION.

3. GOT WITHDRAWAL DECISION WAS CLEARLY TAKEN IN ORDER TO GET IN LINE WITH GENERAL AFRICAN THINKING, BUT THE WITHDRAWAL OF MOROCCO, ALGERIA AND EGYPT PROBABLY WAS THE MOST DIRECT AND IMMEDIATE CAUSE. WHILE TUNISIA HAS CLOSE RELATIONS WITH SENEGAL AND IVORY COAST, ONLY OTHER AFRICAN STATES STILL PARTICIPATING IN GAMES, IT WAS OBVIOUSLY UNWILLING TO STICK WITH THEM IN A LOST CAUSE. UNDOUBTEDLY GOT ALSO HAD NEXT OAU MEETING IN MIND WHEN RECORD ON OLYMPIC GAMES SOLIDARITY MAY BE USED AS TEST OF AFRICAN QUOTE RESPECTABILITY UNQUOTE. TUNISIA WANTS TO PROTECT WHAT IT PERCEIVES AS ITS MORE IMPORTANT INTERESTS IN OAU, AND IS UNWILLING TO JEOPARDIZE THESE FOR SAKE OF OLYMPIC PRINCIPLES.

4. THIS INCIDENT IS REFLECTION OF BASIC GOT FOREIGN POLICY, IN WHICH TUNISIA USUALLY APPROACHES CONTENTIOUS ISSUES IN A "MODERATE" STATE OF MIND BUT IN THE END IS WILLING, ALBEIT RELUCTANTLY, TO JOIN MAJORITY RATHER THAN RISK ISOLATION.
MULCAHY

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